

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: The Deanship Within Higher Education: A case study to describe and evaluate what skills and experiences are valued most by academic deans concerning their leadership.

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Academic deans are worthy of our attention since they occupy a pivotal role at the critical nexus of academic and administrative operations. The decanal position in contemporary higher education is situated between the leadership and managerial responsibilities within the school as well as the views of central administration and their managerial expectations (Arntzen, 2015). This descriptive case study examined what skills and experiences deans value most concerning their leadership including the affect preparation has on their ability to navigate the deanship. Findings were examined through the lens of Bolman & Deal's (2008) Leadership Theory from a constructivist epistemological stance (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Purposeful sampling was utilized to obtain 10 participants from Midwest State University (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Data collection was comprised of open-ended semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire, and collection of participants' curricula vitae. Data analysis included inductive analysis of interviews in conjunction with conceptual content analysis of participants' curricula vitae (Creswell, 2002; Beck & Manuel, 2004). The findings indicate that deans need to: continuously self-assess where they are currently within the needed skills to better position themselves for

improvement; understand the dean's position within contemporary higher education and the culture of their institution; be able to supervise and participate in those general administrative functions of the position; and effectively engage people to accomplish the work of the deanship. The implications for practice are deans need to have adequate support and training opportunities related to the four findings including professional degree programs and professional development opportunities to provide and support administrative and leadership practices.